



Enhancing the Contribution of Non-Wood Forest Products to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security in Central African Countries (GCP/RAF/441/GER)

1. Introduction

How to raise awareness of policy makers on the importance of non-wood forest products for food security and income generation of local populations in Central Africa? How to show policy makers the major influence of the existing legal and institutional framework on the development of NWFP's value chains?

In order to respond to these questions, from 14th to 19th October 2010, an **exchange and study tour from Cameroon to Gabon on the entrepreneurial development of the NWFP sector on regional, national and local level in Central African countries** was organized by the project GCP/RAF/441/GER.

Due to the strong synergies between the two NWFP projects of FAO, the study tour was organized in collaboration with the project GCP/RAF/408/EC "Mobilization and capacity building for small and medium scale enterprises involved in non wood forest products value chains in Central Africa", financed by the European Union.

The project "Enhancing the contribution of non-wood forest products to poverty alleviation and food security in Central African Countries"

Global objectives: Improved conservation and management of NWFP resources and enhanced livelihood and food security level of forest dependent households

Project financed by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Germany

Regional level: Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) and the Regional Project Coordination based in Yaoundé, Cameroon

National level: Central African Republic (Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries), Gabon (Ministry of Water and Forests) and Republic of Congo (Ministry of Sustainable Development, Forestry Economics and Environment)

Executing Agency: FAO

Duration: 1 October 2009 - 30 Sept. 2012 (3 years)

The study tour created space for exchange between representatives of forest ministries and project members coming from Gabon, Congo, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, national and international NGO's on the one hand and NWFP producers and traders, research and development institutions, transformation industries in Cameroon and Gabon on the other hand about the challenges and opportunities within the NWFP sector.

2. Cross-border trade

On the different markets in the South province of Cameroon, non-wood forest products are not only traded for the local or national market but also to Equatorial-Guinea, Gabon and Nigeria. NWFP from the border market Kye-Ossi are mainly sold to Equatorial-Guineans and to a lesser extent to Gabonese clients who prefer the market of Abang-Minko also called *marché mondial* on the road between Ambam and Bitam.



Figure 1: Selling of bush mango (*Irvingia gabonensis*) in the border market of Abang Minko, Cameroon (Photo: Luisa Cruz)

Non-wood forest products sold in the markets with destination Gabon and Equatorial-Guinea are amongst others ndo'o (*Irvingia gabonensis*), njansang (*Ricinodendron heudelotii*), kola (*Cola acuminata*), bitter kola (*Garcinia kola*), bark from essok (*Garcinia lucida*), nuts (*Coula edulis*), ebaye (*Pentaclethra macrophylla*) and safou (*Dacryodes edulis*).

3. The non-wood forest product market between Cameroon and Nigeria

A study conducted by SNV in 2010 shows that huge quantities of NWFP are exported from Cameroon to Nigeria and that the Nigerian market is of crucial importance for Cameroonian traders. The most traded non-wood forest products are bush mango (*Irvingia gabonensis*), kola (*Cola acuminata*), bitter kola (*Garcinia kola*), ebaye (*Pentaclethra macrophylla*) and kutu (different species of wild mushrooms). In addition to the market in Ebolowa, South province of Cameroon, Eru or okok (*Gnetum* spp.) is sold to Nigeria from the Center and South-West regions of Cameroon.

Apart from NWFP already known and consumed in Cameroon, Nigerian traders are ready to buy other products which are less known in Cameroon but well appreciated by Nigerian consumers. These products include the achii seeds (*Brachystegia eurycoma*), the seeds and fruits of the African bread tree or Ukwa/ Etup (*Treculia africana*), the seeds of akparata (*Afzelia africana*) and okobo (*Mucuna sloanei*).¹

The exchange with Cameroonian traders in Ebolowa revealed that Nigerian traders are organized on a high level and have a high purchasing power in the South province of Cameroon influencing product prices for example for bush mango. In order to reduce their dependency from external funds to buy products in the production areas, Cameroonian traders should organize themselves and accumulate a working capital.

¹ Names are listed in Ibo, a Nigerian local language.



Figure 2: Traders presenting complete and cut leaves of okok/ eru (*Gnetum* spp.) and koutous/ local mushrooms. (Photo: Luisa Cruz)

4. Local population uses NWFP as security net

In the Provinces of Woleu-Ntem and Estuaire in Gabon, the participants of the exchange and study tour had the opportunity to discuss with local populations about the importance of non-wood forest products in the villages where one can find a high variety of these products.

The local demand of NWFP for consumption and trade varies greatly from one village to another. The most utilized and traded products are derived from agricultural activities; non-wood forest products are consumed and sold during their period of fructification. During lean periods of agricultural products, NWFP serve as a local security net through their consumption and commercialization.

5. Domestication and processing of bush mango

Researcher Mr. Alfred Ngoye from the Research Institute for Tropical Ecology (IRET) explained the setup of the experimental sites of IRET in Libreville to the participants of the exchange and study tour. He explained that the domestication for bush mango, commonly called indigenous chocolate, odika or andok in Gabon (*Irvingia gabonensis*), is very well advanced on the experimental fields. The next phase should now focus on the dissemination of the high performing varieties outside the experimental sites under natural conditions so that producers are able to profit from an increased production and a reduced age for the trees to mature.

The coffee entrepreneur Mr. André Pierre who is also engaged in the processing of bush mango explained and showed to the participants of the study tour his coffee transformation plant. In addition to his economic activities related to coffee, Mr. Pierre recently started to manufacture a bush mango splitting machine which will allow a better use of its pulp.

6. Evaluation of the exchange and study tour

The evaluation at the end of the exchange and study tour identified challenges and opportunities for the development of the NWFP sector as perceived by the participants of the tour:

Opportunities of the NWFP sector in Central Africa:

- Huge diversity of NWFP,
- High demand of NWFP on the market,
- Existence of NWFP markets at local, national and regional level,
- Willingness of development institutions to promote the NWFP sector.

Challenges for the NWFP sector in Central Africa

- Legal framework not adapted to the realities of the NWFP sector,
- Increased transport costs through numerous informal taxes and fees,
- Difficult access to financial means and credits for small and medium scale forest enterprises,
- Complicated and non-transparent procedures for the delivery of legal documents needed for NWFP trade.

World Food Day

On 16 October 2010, World Food Day enters its 30th year. This auspicious occasion also marks the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The theme of this year's observance is United against hunger, chosen to recognize the efforts made in the fight against world hunger. Uniting against hunger becomes real when state and civil society organizations and the private sector work in partnership at all levels to defeat hunger, extreme poverty and malnutrition at national, regional and international levels.

UNITED AGAINST HUNGER



16 October 2010 World Food Day



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Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
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The project GCP/RAF/441/GER celebrated the World Food Day in Bitam, Gabon with a sensitisation meeting explaining the contribution of non-wood forest products to poverty alleviation and food security and introducing the conceptual approach of the right to adequate food and its implementation at national level. Representatives of government agencies such as the Prefect of the Department of Ntem and the Vice-president of the departmental council with other guests visited an exposition of typical non-wood forest products sold in Gabon presented by women traders.